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Editorial

The US' role in installing Aquino and promoting his rule

US imperialism had a great interest and played a huge role in the country's recently concluded reactionary elections. It intervened to the hilt to ensure that the elections appeared credible and

that Benigno "Noy" Aquino III would be installed in power. We

can expect the new chief puppet to rely heavily on the US' might especially in the face of his own feeble hold on power. In exchange, we can also expect the US to intensify its political and military inter-

vention and play an even bigger role in counter-

revolution and in enforcing its financial and economic dictates.

As in its other semicolonies, the US has a long history of intervening in Philippine elections and politics. The US particularly viewed the recent elections as crucial to the stability of the ruling system and American interests in the Philippines in the face of the intense crisis besetting the country. The US wanted the 2010 elections to serve as a means of controlling and mitigating the worsening contradictions among rival ruling class factions. It also used the recent polls to alleviate the people's growing disappointment and resistance to the ruling system and create an illusion of renewed hope.

Towards this end, the US pushed for an automated election system (AES) or computerized vote count. The system works in such a way that any manipulation or fraud that may be perpetrated can be accomplished so smoothly that it becomes difficult to prove. This gives the US an opportunity to effectively but discreetly and shrewdly influence election results. US officials claim that automated elections are so effective that their results are hard to contest.

The US' more visible intervention was manifested in the visit of a number of high-ranking American officials to Aquino a few weeks before the actual election. Aquino was later featured on the cover of leading US international magazine *Time*, signalling the US' direct endorsement. What followed was an outpouring of support from American big business and the country's big compradors. The support included substantial

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contributions to Aquino's campaign.

It is Aquino's large but dubious lead over his rivals that the US has been invoking to portray him as the man with a clear mandate to lead the neocolonial state. The day after the elections, he was once more featured in *Time* in an article hailing Aquino's landslide victory even as the counting of the votes had just begun.

Nonetheless, the stench of electoral manipulation reeked in a matter of days. Even the delegation of observers from the US was able to witness anomalies in the conduct of the AES. Congress was compelled to launch an investigation. Various sectors questioned the very integrity of the recent polls. Talk was rife of the possibility that the proclamation of the new president and vice president would be delayed.

Fearing the further spread of incredulity over the election results, the US once more entered the scene with US Ambassador Harry Thomas Jr. visiting Aquino on May 22. The imperialist representative declared the elections to be "clean" and Aquino the "winner." It

was the closest thing to a US pronouncement that Aquino was their man. These statements served to rein in rival ruling class factions from questioning the AES and insinuated that Aquino's proclamation should push through so that the new US-Aquino regime could begin doing business.

We can expect the US to deepen its intervention and play an even bigger role as Aquino attempts to consolidate his hold on state power amid the raging crisis of the ruling reactionary system.

The very first thing Aquino must address is the public clamor to put Arroyo on trial and punish her for her many crimes against the people. Should Aquino turn out to be serious in fulfilling this campaign promise of his, Arroyo will surely put up a fight and continue to assert her power through her control over Congress, the military, the Supreme Court and many other state agencies. Arroyo is ready to continually erode and challenge Aquino's power.


In the face of such challenges and threats from the Arroyo camp, Aquino will have little choice but to rely on the US even more, espe-

cially with the latter's superior control over the military, finance and big business. The US will meantime be pushed into coming up with a compromise deal for Gloria Arroyo, similar to those crafted for Estrada and Marcos, but one which will be completely unacceptable to the Filipino people. It is the US' primordial desire to alleviate conflicts among ruling class factions even if it can exploit such infighting and the consequent weakening of the puppet state to intensify its intervention.

Aquino is sure to reciprocate his full dependence on the US with an obsequious submission to US imperialist interests in the Philippines. He has not shown even an iota of patriotism.

He will definitely continue implementing the usual US imperialist policy dictates. He will support the US' permanent military presence and its growing role in the counterrevolutionary war. He will protect US economic interests in the Philippines and see to the continued implementation of neoliberal policies, among them the policy dictates of the IMF such as the imposition of more taxes to resolve the government's gargantuan deficit.

The various rival factions of the ruling class are united in their puppetry to the US and in protecting its interests in the country. The economic and political interests of the big comprador bourgeoisie and big landlords are tied to imperialist rule over the country. They are imperialism's partners in plunder and in maintaining the semicolonial and semifeudal system in the country. As was the case during Corazon Aquino's rule, it is the so-called K-mag-anak Inc. or the big comprador-landlord Aquino-Cojuangco clan that is now in a position to maximally exploit power under the new US-Aquino regime.

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The new US-Aquino regime's rule will be marked by the Filipino people's struggle against exploitation and oppression. It will be marked by the people's struggle for national freedom and genuine democracy and against the new puppet regime's clinging dependence on its imperialist master. It will be marked by the struggles for genuine land reform and national indus-

trialization; by the struggle against the perpetuation of imperialist neoliberal policies, by struggles to raise the wages of workers and rank-and-file employees; by the struggle against rising unemployment and worsening poverty; by the struggle against the brutal and suppressive antipeople policies and measures of the puppet reactionary state.

These struggles are part of the advancing revolutionary struggle to end US imperialist, feudal and bureaucrat capitalist rule. It is the duty of all revolutionary and progressive forces and the entire people to further advance the national-democratic movement against continuing US domination and intervention under the new puppet Aquino regime. **AB**

Hold Arroyo accountable for her crimes against the people—*NDFP*

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) challenged the incoming administration of Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III to hold Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her cohorts accountable for their many cases of human rights violations, brazen corruption and plunder against the Filipino people.

This summed up NDFP Negotiating Panel chair Ka Luis Jalandoni's call to the incoming administration which will assume office on June 30. The broad masses of the people expect Aquino to fulfill his promise to investigate and prosecute the Arroyo regime within the legal and political framework of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, said Jalandoni.

The International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) issued virtually the same call as it concluded its Fourth Congress held in Utrecht, The Netherlands on May 30. The IAPL vowed not to allow Arroyo and her cohorts to evade accountability for their grave crimes against the Filipino people.

Atty. Edre Olalia, who was reelected IAPL president said the initiation of immediate and active legal processes to hold Arroyo and her allies accountable for their crimes against the people will serve as a benchmark in judging the new regime.

The NDFP demanded that Ar-

royo be held to account for 1,191 cases of extrajudicial killings, more than 200 cases of involuntary disappearance, hundreds of cases of frustrated murder, 1,028 cases of torture, 317 cases of political detention and the destruction of the livelihoods of millions of civilians in both countryside and city. Aquino's actions on this matter will serve as an indicator of the new administration's resolve to implement the Comprehensive Agree-



ment on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), said Jalandoni.

The Aquino administration must also firmly take up Arroyo and her cohorts' crimes of plunder and corruption. This will entail the exposure of the basic causes of social justice and maldevelopment and will thus be of great benefit to negotiations on social and economic reforms, stressed Jalandoni. The latter constitutes the second substantive agenda in the GRP-NDFP peace talks as defined in The Hague Joint Declaration.

The Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines (Ecumenical Voice) also expressed the same expectations.

Meantime, in a rally organized by Desaparecidos, relatives of victims of involuntary disappearance asked Aquino whether the straight and narrow path he touted in his campaign advertisement would lead to justice.

On the other hand, the NDFP warned that Aquino's failure to make good on his promises within his first 100 days in office will outrage the people and once more expose the rottenness not only of the entire administration but of the entire ruling system. **AB**

Progressives among the winners in party-list elections

Progressives were among the 28 party-list organizations that won in the recently concluded elections. The winners were proclaimed by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) on May 31.

Gabriela Women's Party and Bayan Muna won two seats each while Anakpawis, ACT Teachers and Kabataan Party-list won one seat each. ACT Teachers is the newest addition to the list of progressive groups winning seats in Congress.

But also among the other groups that won seats were organizations that were set up, funded and operated by family members and cohorts of Gloria Arroyo such as Ang Galing Pinoy (AGP), Alagad Party-list, Kakusa and Agbiag! Tim-puyog Ilocano, Inc.

These fake party-list organizations' fraudulent wins significantly deprived progressive party-list groups of their erstwhile leads.

It is highly dubious that virtually all of Ang Galing Pinoy's votes

came from Pampanga where Arroyo and her close allies, the Pinedas stole the elections.

The Pinedas, who are the province's jueteng lords wrested the provincial leadership from the hands of popular priest Ed Panlilio.

Many have questioned the proclamation of AGP whose first nominee is Gloria Arroyo's son Mikey. Bayan Muna has filed a disqualification case against AGP with the COMELEC and the Supreme Court, saying that the group does not really represent the marginalized sector of security guards, tricycle drivers and vendors. Bayan Muna particularly questioned Mikey Arroyo's qualification to represent this sector. The COMELEC has temporarily shelved Arroyo's oath-taking but

has not revoked AGP's registration.

Also suspended are the proclamations of 11 other party-list organizations because of pending disqualification cases against them or their nominees. Among these cases are those filed by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) against groups that do not really represent marginalized sectors but are fronts established and run by Malacañang.

These groups are Ako Bicol and the rabidly fascist organization ANAD, along with groups put up by businessmen such as LPGMA (LPG Marketers Association) and by religious organizations such as Buhay and CIBAC.

BAYAN-Bicol has filed a disqualification case with the COMELEC against Ako Bicol because its founder and first nominee Elizaldy Co, a big businessman and contractor of government construction projects, and its second nominee Noel Rosal, who is mayor of Legazpi City are wealthy and powerful men in Bicol and close allies of Arroyo. **AB**

Restiveness in the AFP

A number of military officers are already poised to challenge Noyon Aquino's power even before the president-elect could assume office. These officers, many of them from Class 1978 of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) are disgruntled in the face of pronouncements from the Aquino camp that it would boot out the AFP's current chief of staff Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit who had just been appointed by Gloria Arroyo in March.

Bangit is known to be an Arroyo loyalist.

Bangit's appointment forms part of Arroyo's moves to maintain her influence over the military even after she steps down as president on June 30. Arroyo is expected to wield such influence to block any moves from



the new regime to prosecute her, put her on trial and punish her.

With the Commission on Appointments (CA) failing to confirm Bangit's appointment before the close of the 14th Congress, his appointment is deemed temporary and he could thus be easily replaced anytime. Senate

President Juan Ponce Enrile, however, has asserted that Arroyo can extend Bangit's term until December. Any opposition to this move can later be resolved at the Supreme Court, said Enrile. On the other hand, the Aquino camp has declared that it would replace Bangit immediately should he refuse to resign.

The struggle for control and influence over the AFP is one of the many flashpoints between the new ruling Aquino clique and the former ruling Arroyo clique. Aquino, on the one hand is trying to consolidate his power even as Arroyo on the other hand persists in maintaining her broad influence and power over the military and various agencies of the reactionary state. **AB**



NPA seizes 17 firearms in tactical offensives

The New People's Army (NPA) seized 17 firearms in a series of tactical offensives in Davao Oriental, Camarines Sur, Davao City, Masbate and Negros Occidental from May 22 to 29. Eighteen enemy forces including an army lieutenant were killed and 28 were wounded in these encounters.

Davao Oriental. The NPA netted 11 high-powered firearms in a daring raid on a patrol base of the Philippine Army's 28th IB in Sitio Chapter, Barangay Maputi, Banay-banay town on May 24. Joint forces of the NPA's 3rd Pulang Bagani Company and Wil-

fredo Zapanta Command seized two FN Minimi light machine guns, two M203 grenade launchers, three M14 rifles, three Garand rifles and an M16 rifle.

Three soldiers died on the spot, four others were wounded and two surrendered and were released by the people's guerrillas. A Red fighter identified as Ka Tonyo was also killed in the fierce fighting along the Davao-Mati National Highway. The 28th IB troops serve as a private army of big capitalists

Midnight appointments to tie Aquino's hands

Gloria Arroyo has embarked on a frenzy of appointing her loyalists to various government positions in the remaining weeks of her term. According to the latest reports, she has appointed up to 250 people since March 9. But she claims to have made the appointments before this date to circumvent a constitutional ban on appointing new government officials from March 10 until the end of her term.

Arroyo's latest appointee is Efraim Genuino who will be chairing the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) for another year. congressional budgetary regulations and are not actually subject to audit.

Genuino's reappointment as Arroyo has also appointed certain people to serve fixed terms. Thus, their appointments could not

be easily revoked by Aquino. Among them are former members of her cabinet who have been placed in sensitive positions such as Ignacio Bunye and Peter Favila who have been assigned to the Monetary Board and Jesus Dureza who has

Genuino's reappointment as PAGCOR chair is accompanied by the term extensions of four members of its board of directors, also courtesy of Arroyo. Arroyo wants to maintain control over PAGCOR because it rakes in P30 billion annually. It is the government's third biggest source of funds, next to the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs. Its funds do not fall under



been appointed head of the Mindanao Development Authority.

The appointment of Arroyo loyalists to key positions in the bureaucracy forms part of her clique's schemes to paralyze the Aquino regime or make it extremely difficult for it to operate, what with these officials' determination to advance the Arroyo clique's interests.

Meanwhile, it is not only midnight appointments but midnight deals that the Arroyo camp has been up to. Sen. Francis Pangilinan has revealed that Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales has wiped out the AFP Modernization Program's P300 million budget, with the Arroyo government massively and hastily closing deals ostensibly for the purchase of expensive military equipment.

The Arroyo regime has also reportedly been rushing the necessary papers to cover up a government agency's release of huge funds for the second district of Pampanga where Arroyo ran for Congress and for 186 barangays in Camarines Sur's second district where Arroyo's son Dato was a congressional candidate. These districts received infusions of up to P345 million. **AB**



such as the Maverick Construction Company, said Ka Simon Santiago, political director of the NPA Merar-do Arce Command.

Camarines Sur. Red fighters ambushed a 12-man unit of the 42nd IB in Barangay Bicalen, Presentacion on May 30, seizing an M60 light machine gun, two M16 rifles and a medical kit. Four soldiers were killed, including their commanding officer 1Lt. Miguel Logronio while four others were wounded.

The NPA earlier harassed a military detachment in the village, killing an enemy soldier. Lieutenant Logronio's unit was ordered to pursue the guerrillas to recover the sol-

dier's body. As they moved towards Barangay Bicalen at around 9:00 in the evening, the NPA detonated a land mine along their path.

The four other dead casualties were earlier reported as missing in action before their bodies

were found at dawn the following day.

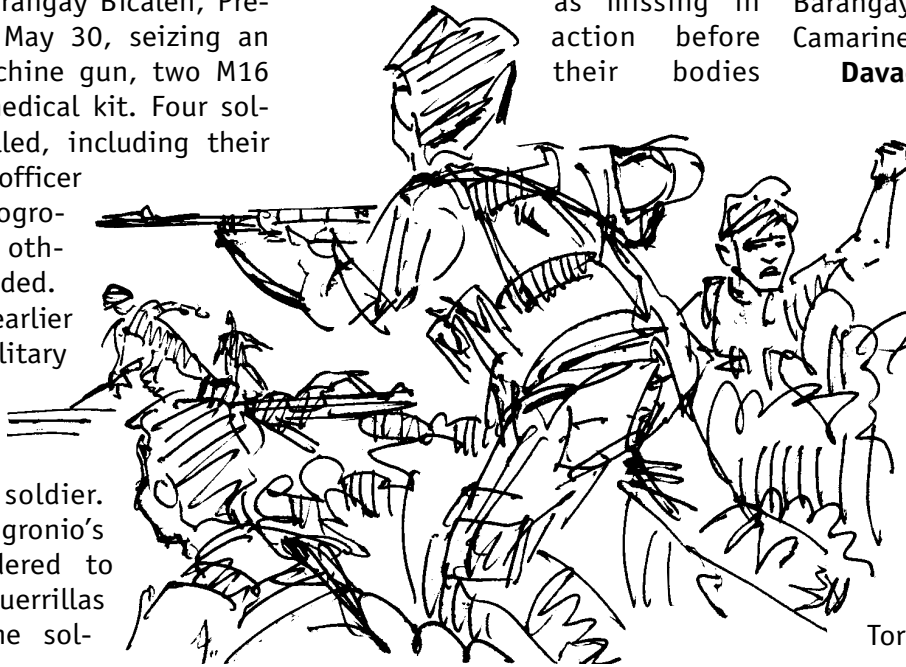
The NPA also harassed that same day the detachments of the Philippine Army's 22nd IB in Barangay San Pedro, Iriga City and Barangay Cambalidio, Libmanan, Camarines Sur.

Davao City. Red fighters of the NPA's Guerrilla Front 51 killed a soldier from the 69th IB and wounded seven others including a CAFGU element in an ambush in Barangay Sibulan, Toril District on May 29.

A week earlier, three 29th IB troopers were killed and a CAFGU element was wounded in an ambush by Red fighters of this same guerrilla front in Barangay Baracatan, Toril District.

Masbate. The NPA detonated explosives in an ambush in Sitio Umoroy, Barangay Marintoc, Mobo on May 28, wounding seven police officers from the Public Safety Management Battalion and destroying their Toyota Hi-Lux pickup truck. Another firefight ensued when the police and the 85th IB sent reinforcements to the ambush site.

Negros Occidental. Red fighters of the NPA Leonardo Panaligan Command (LPC) confiscated a Thompson submachine gun and two shotguns from security guards as they attacked the compound of Hacienda Estrella in Barangay Biao, Binalbagan on May 22. Six soldiers from the 11th IB were killed and five others were wounded in four gunbattles that ensued between the military and the NPA, according to LPC spokesman Ka JB Regalado.



Military operations hindering release of 4 captives

Intensified military operations of the 10th ID in Compostela Valley are a major hindrance to the prompt release of four captives of the NPA.

This was the response of the NPA Crucifino Uballas Command (CUC) in the Southern Mindanao Region to the appeal of the families and well-meaning groups and individuals for the NPA to release the three Philippine Army soldiers and a CAFGU militiaman. Although the CUC respects and recognizes the appeal, it believes that the families, groups and individuals should bring the matter to the attention of the Philippine Army's 10th ID.

The military's "rescue operations" are currently the biggest obstacle to the early release of the captives.

Captives Cpl. Marcial Bawagan, Cpl. Ariel P. Asumo, Cpl. Eduardo Alcala and CAFGU element Victor Pitogo were arrested by Red fighters in Barangay Concepcion, Mawab, Compostela Valley on May 12. Their cases are now undergoing revolutionary legal and judicial processes.

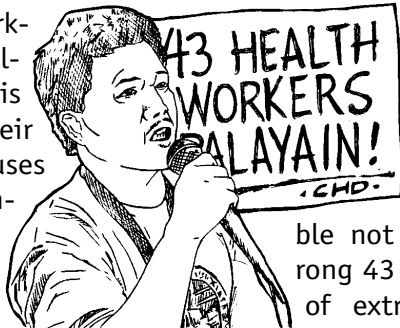
AB

Plight of Morong 43 brought before UNHRC

Various church-based organizations and human rights advocates called on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to look into the case of the Morong 43. The Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines, along with KARAPATAN, the Union of Peoples Lawyers and representatives from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) went to Geneva, Switzerland on June 3 to attend the 14th session of the UNHRC.

Among those who testified before the UNHRC was Roneo "Jigs" Clamor, deputy secretary general of KARAPATAN and husband of Dr. Merry Mia-Clamor, one of the 43 detained medical workers. He related that soldiers are intimidating his wife and threatening their family because she refuses to admit to being a member of the New People's Army.

According to Fr. Rex



Reyes, secretary general of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, they are hoping that the UNHRC will investigate the case. Marie Hilao-Enriquez, KARAPATAN secretary general said Gloria Arroyo should be held accountable not only in the Morong 43 case but in cases of extrajudicial killings

as well. According to Enriquez, the number of victims of the killings under Oplan Bantay Laya is now 1,991 while 205 were abducted and 1,028 were tortured and forcibly evacuated due to intense militarization.

Reyes thanked UN Special Rapporteur Prof. Philip Alston for his support of the victims' struggle. Professor Alston issued a report to the UNHRC in 2008 implicating the Arroyo regime and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the killing and abduction of civilians and activists. Alston attended the session to once again show his report.

Meanwhile, relatives and supporters visited the Morong 43 in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City on June 6. They called on the new regime of Benigno "Noy" Aquino III to release the detained health workers and punish Arroyo for her perpetration of political violence against the people. **AB**

Growing cases of peasant suppression

A union leader was killed, peasants accused of supporting the NPA in Negros were intimidated and harassed and farmers fighting despotic landlords were persecuted. These are just a few in the continuing violations of human rights under the reactionary regime.

June 3. Guards of the Manila South Coast Development Corp. violently demolished 21 houses of farmers in Hacienda Looc in Nasugbu, Batangas who have long asserted their right to the land. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) granted them Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) but canceled them in 1995 when the hacienda lands were sold to Manila South Coast which is planning a

big eco-tourism project in the area. The case is still pending in the Supreme Court.

June 2. Motorcycle-riding men killed Edward Panganiban, secretary of the Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa Takata, in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. Takata Philippines Corp. is a manufacturer of automotive air bags and seatbelts. The men opened fire on Panganiban at past 5:00 in the afternoon while he was

waiting for a ride to work. He sustained at least seven gunshot wounds. Negotiations for a Collective Bargaining Agreement between the company and Panganiban's union are ongoing. He is the ninth worker activist killed in Southern Tagalog and the 96th unionist killed under the Arroyo regime.

May 22. Elements from the 11th IB broke into the house of Luminada Castellano, 50, and destroyed her kitchen things and clothes cabinet. The soldiers also broke into the house of her neighbor Mercedita Cabudillo. They scattered Cabudillo's belongings, broke her water jug, radio and chairs and stole her chicken. The soldiers fired at Monsito Castellano when they met him along the way. They also ransacked his house and kicked

him while forcing him to admit that he was an NPA member. Another farmer, Cristuto Meñiola Jr., 15, was threatened with a gun while he was riding a carabao. He was forced down on the ground and mauled. The abusive soldiers also ordered him to fetch water. Meñiola's uncle Robert Buca was also mauled by the soldiers.

These abuses were revealed in a fact-finding mission conducted by the September 21 Movement-Southern Negros, Karapatan-Negros, Anakpawis and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas on May 29 in Sitio Pange and Sitio Casipungan, Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan, Negros Occidental. The abuses took place a day after NPA guerrillas fired at a number of soldiers of the 11th IB in the area.

May 21. Policemen and guards of Hacienda Yulo in Sitio Buntog, Barangay Canlubang, Calamba City arrested farmers who joined a protest camp against the Yulo family's plan to evict them from the 7,100-hectare estate and convert it into a subdivision and golf course. Despite a pending petition by the farmers before the DAR, the more than 50 joint forces of police, SWAT and guards of the Yulo-owned Laguna Estate Development Corp. and San Cristobal Realty Corp. forcibly dispersed the protesters. Ten of the farmers were slapped with false charges and remain in detention, including four women and three minors.

May 19. The 19th ID accused farmers in Barangay Antipolo, Albura, Leyte of supporting the NPA just because they supported the Anakpawis party in the recent elections. The soldiers summoned them to the barangay school and kept on accusing them for an hour of supporting the NPA. The farmers were likewise told to stop supporting Anakpawis and senatorial candidates Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza. A soldier kicked a 13-year old boy when he failed to name who in the village are feeding the NPA.

AB

Tuition fees to be hiked anew

Three hundred thirty-seven (337) schools across the country have been granted permission to increase tuition and other fees this year. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), tuition fees will increase by 10-30% or P30-50 per unit. Seventy-seven (77) of these schools are in the National Capital Region, 43 in Region 3, twenty-four (24) in Region 6 and 18 in Region 7. Two public schools were allowed to hike their tuition fees while 27 were allowed to increase other fees.

The National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) denounced the fee increases, saying they are untimely as prices of commodities have also risen while workers' wages remain low. The NUSP added that if the CHED allows the tuition fee increases, the number of out-of-school youth will also increase.

The students threatened to launch protest actions if the schools proceed with the tuition fee increases. They said the CHED did not respond to a petition filed by students and their parents to enforce a moratorium on tuition fee hikes. They also said that the fee increases in most of the schools are illegal since no consultation was held with the students and their parents on the matter.

Kabataan Party-list Rep. Raymond Palatino said almost eight million youths fail to enter college due to the commercialization of education. For every ten students who finish high school, only two are able to enroll in college. It isn't surprising, he said, if tuition fees have been increasing by 10% annually because the private sector controls schools and regards education as a business rather than a service.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) expressed concern about the future of the children of workers due to the rising tuition fees. The number of youths struggling to get an education or land jobs will increase, the KMU said. Anakpawis Rep. Joel Maglunsod lamented that it is difficult for the poor to enroll even in state colleges and universities as tuition fees in such schools are also high due to the measly budget the government provides them.

The NUSP and KMU challenged incoming president Benigno "Noy" Aquino III to make true his promise to the youth that he would stop tuition fee hikes and allocate a higher budget for education.

According to a study conducted by the NUSP, tuition fees increased by P855 per unit in the past nine years. In 2001, the average tuition was only P230.79 per unit. One hundred seven (107) elementary and high schools in Metro Manila have also filed requests for tuition fee increases, according to the Department of Education.

AB

OFW wages cannot pay tuition fees

Tuition fees in most colleges and universities are so high, even the wages of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) are not enough to pay them. Tuition fees will increase by 10-30% when classes start in June.

According to Migrante, the usual pay of an OFW in the Middle East only comes to \$250-450 a month (equivalent to ₱11,000-19,800 at \$1.00=₱44.00). An OFW needs to earn ₱23,400.00 or \$532.00 every month because the daily wage needed to live decently in Metro Manila is ₱780.00. **AB**

Only 30% of college grads to find jobs

Only some 30% of college graduates are going to find employment this year, according to a research conducted by the IBON Foundation.

According to the Labor Force Survey in April 2009, there are 848,000 new and previous college graduates seeking employment. But only 256,000 mostly low quality jobs await them.

The data do not include graduates who land jobs unrelated to their courses in college, IBON Foundation said.

In 2009, up to 4.3 million Filipinos were unemployed. The number has swelled with the addition of 523,000 unemployed new graduates, based on January 2010 data. **AB**

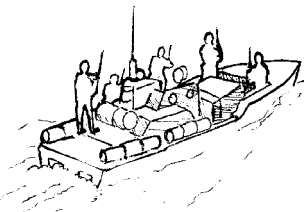
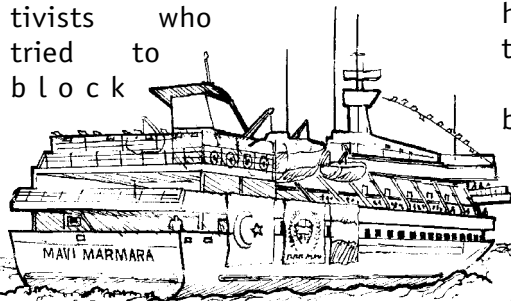
Israel attacks ship bearing humanitarian aid to Palestine

At least nine activists were killed when Israeli commandos attacked six ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza, Palestine in international waters on May 31. The group of ships tagged the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" was carrying 10,000 tons of aid amounting to \$20 million. The cargo included food, medicines and construction materials such as cement for the reconstruction of infrastructure in Gaza destroyed by Israeli bombs.

Activists from various countries desiring freedom and peace for the Palestinians organized the aid project to alleviate the situation of 1.5 million people in Gaza who have been under an Israeli blockade for four years now. The ship carried 633 persons from 37 countries. The passengers included Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead Corrigan, former UN Assistant Secretary-General Dennis Halliday and parliamentarians from Europe and Arab countries. There were also activists, unionists, journalists, academicians, religious leaders, elderly persons, women and children.

The passengers recounted that the commandos were already firing at the ships from helicopters even before they boarded them. As they boarded the ships, the Israeli soldiers seized all com-

munication equipment, cameras and memory cards to prevent the victims from reporting the incident. They also took all cash, credit cards, computers and even the personal belongings of the activists like clothing. Activists who tried to block



the soldiers were tasered and beaten. The passengers fought back with sticks, kitchen knives and anything they could get their hands on.

The ship was brought to the port of Ashdod in Israel where the activists were detained. They were released only on June 6.

All of those who were killed were aboard the flotilla's lead ship, the MV Mavi Marmara, which is owned by the Turkish group Foundation for Human Rights and Freedom and Humanitarian Relief (IHH). The ship carried 581 activists, 400 of them from Turkey. Eight of those confirmed dead were Turkish activists all shot in the head at close range. Sixty other activists were injured.

Many more are feared to have been killed as several activists have yet to be accounted for.

Various international organizations like the UN Human Rights Council and several governments strongly denounced the raid. It has spurred mass rallies in Turkey, Indonesia and other predominantly Muslim countries.

The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) has called on the international community to join

the Global Day of Action against the 43-year Israeli occupation of Gaza Strip and the West bank on June 5.

The International League of People's Struggle (ILPS) denounced the barbaric attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla as a crime against humanity. According to ILPS Chairman Jose Ma. Sison, the US and other western imperialist powers are parties to the crime due to their continued support for the evil Zionist regime in Israel. The United Nations proved useless in restraining war crimes and crimes against humanity repeatedly being committed by Israel. Sison said only a revolutionary repudiation of Israeli occupation can end all these. The ILPS called on the people of the world to support the just struggle of Palestinians for national liberation, democracy, peace and a better life.

Filipino groups and organizations in the Philippines, Hongkong and Canada are among the growing numbers of critics of the latest Israeli atrocity against the Palestinians. On June 1, members of the Asian Students Association (ASA) and the ILPS and other Filipino groups launched a protest action before the Israeli embassy at the Admiralty Center in Hongkong. They demanded that the remaining hundreds of captives be released, the economic blockade on Gaza be lifted and the government of Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel be held accountable.

On June 2, activists led by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) picketed the Israeli embassy in Makati City. They said Israel recognized no law and violated international policies when it attacked the Mavi Marmara.

In Marawi City, hundreds of Moro students burned the Israeli flag in a rally in Plaza Cabili on June 5. The Moros rallied to the slogan "Bangsamoro Action Against Israeli Terrorism." Members of the Ranaw Youth for Peace and Sustainable Development, United Youth for Peace and Development, Inc., Bangsamoro Center for Just Peace and Cotabato Center for Peace and Development Initiatives, Inc. attended

The NPA does not recruit child combatants—CPP

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) vehemently denied accusations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that the New People's Army (NPA) recruits child soldiers. The CPP said the claim is baseless and is meant to slander the NPA before the public and human rights advocates in the country and abroad.

The NPA upholds and defends childrens' rights in accordance with its own rules and the policies of the CPP.

According to the CPP, most of the children that the AFP claims to be child fighters are victims of the AFP's abuses especially in its operations in the countryside.

The CPP cited the example of Grecil Buya, a nine-year old schoolgirl killed by soldiers of the 101st Bde in an operation in New Bataan, Compostela Valley on March 31, 2007. The soldiers even planted an M16 rifle beside Grecil's body before taking pictures of her to make it appear that she was an NPA child soldier.

The CPP also cited the case of Michelle Adelantar, a 17-year old girl who was illegally arrested by the AFP in February in San Jose de Buan, Samar for allegedly being an NPA combatant. She is still in the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, against her family's wishes.

In June 1999, soldiers illegally arrested Joel Silvestre, a 13-year old mentally challenged child, in Matuguinao, Samar. The soldiers took advantage of the child's handicap to take him along in military operations. He was given a gun and told to identify supposed NPA supporters. The military also encouraged the media to take pictures and videos of him, in violation of the reactionary government's own laws.

The CPP pointed out that the AFP continues to bar representatives of the United Nations and other independent groups from entering guerrilla zones to prevent them from seeing how the NPA strictly adheres to rules prohibiting the recruitment of child soldiers and how the revolutionary movement upholds the welfare of children.

The AFP is the main violator of children's rights. According to a United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) report in 2007, the AFP's military operations victimized 215,233 children which included 215,060 forcibly evacuated, 58 killed, 58 attempted killed, 10 abducted, 40 maimed, 17 tortured, eight raped or sexually harassed, 51 illegally searched, 63 coerced, 69 illegally arrested and detained, 40 beaten and 196 threatened and intimidated. One hundred six (106) children were orphaned and witnessed the killing of their parents and relatives. **AB**